Safety net for missing children stretched to breaking point

Wednesday 23 March, 2016

Statement by the charity Railway Children in response to today's publication of the report ***Missing Children: Who Cares?*** by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), which finds:

- Children who go missing are left at risk because of “unacceptable inconsistencies” in policing;
- “Widespread inconsistences and shortcomings” in police responses to missing child reports across England and Wales;
- Missing children are sometimes sometimes being inappropriately classified as “absent” (meaning the child is at “no apparent risk”) – when they were in fact at serious risk of harm.

Andy McCullough, Director of Policy and Public Affairs UK at Railway Children, said:

“Missing children are too often victims of a patchwork response, causing some to suffer from a safety net that is being stretched to breaking point. Different police forces are using conflicting criteria and categories when receiving missing children reports, creating a dangerous level of confusion and a higher risk of error.

“This isn't just an issue for the police. It's for local authorities, communities and individuals to remain alert to the dangers children face when they go missing. There's strong leadership from within the police and areas of excellent practice, so it's about making sure the recommendations of the HMIC report are swiftly and effectively put into practice nationwide.

“We fully endorse the report's recommendations – particularly its call for a national database of missing and absent children to be established and for better and more consistent recording and sharing of information across agencies.

Railway Children is also calling for police and local authorities to move away from “missing” and “absent” categories and instead conduct a full risk assessment when every child is reported missing.

Railway Children is currently working with police, government and local authorities to make sure that the 2013 DFE Statutory Guidelines for Children Missing from Home or Care are being implemented and vulnerable children who go missing do not slip through the net.

ENDS

Media Enquiries

Interviews are available through the Railway Children press office on 07932 725267 or andrew@acolliscommunications.com

About Railway Children

Railway Children is a leading children's charity fighting for vulnerable children who live alone at risk on the streets, where they suffer abuse and exploitation. In the UK, society often denies their existence, and in other countries the problem is so prevalent that it has become 'normal'.

Children and young people run away or are forced to leave home where they suffer poverty, violence, abuse and neglect. They find themselves living on the streets because there is nowhere else to go and no one left to turn to. The problems they face on the streets are often even worse than those they endured at home. Every day we fight to change their story.

Railway Children races to reach children as soon as they arrive on the streets and intervene before an abuser can. Our pioneering work in the UK, India and East Africa enables us to get to street children before the streets get to them. For more information on how you can get involved visit www.railwaychildren.org.uk.

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Missing :: Children :: Runaways :: Hmic :: Police :: Young :: Absent :: Risk :: Girl :: Boy :: Homeless ::

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Additional Assets:
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